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CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of device discovery comprising:
downloading a device discovery plug in;
activating the device discovery plug in to collect data describing peripheral devices related to a vendor associated with the device discovery plug in; and
transmitting data describing peripheral devices discovered by the device discovery plug in.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein downloading comprises
downloading the device discovery plug in across a firewall from a web site associated with the vendor.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein activating the device discovery plug in comprises activating the device discovery plug in to collect data describing hard copy output engines.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein activating the device discovery plug in comprises activating the device discovery plug in to collect data describing hard copy output engines selected from a group consisting of: facsimile machines, photocopiers and printers.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein activating the device discovery plug in comprises activating the device discovery plug in to collect data chosen from a group consisting of: model and serial number information and included options from an embedded web server contained in the discovered peripheral devices.
6. The method of claim 1, further comprising organizing collected data into logical groups.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein downloading and activating includes starting a web browser, directing the web browser to a web site associated with the vendor, downloading the device discovery plug in from the vendor web site with the browser and activating the device discovery plug in with the web browser.

8. An article of manufacture comprising a computer usable medium having computer readable code embodied therein that is configured to cause a processor to:

download a device discovery plug in;
activate the device discovery plug in to collect data describing peripheral devices related to a vendor associated with the device discovery plug in; and
transmit data describing peripheral devices discovered by the device discovery plug in.

9. The article of manufacture of claim 8, wherein the computer readable code configured to cause the processor to download comprises computer readable code configured to cause the processor to download the device discovery plug in across a firewall from a web site associated with the vendor.

10. The article of manufacture of claim 8, wherein the computer readable code configured to cause the processor to activate comprises computer readable code configured to cause the processor to activate the device discovery plug in to collect data describing hard copy output engines.

11. The article of manufacture of claim 8, wherein the computer readable code configured to cause the processor to activate comprises computer readable code configured to cause the processor to activate the device discovery plug in to collect data describing hard copy output engines selected from a group consisting of: facsimile machines, photocopiers and printers.

12. The article of manufacture of claim 8, wherein the computer readable code configured to cause the processor to activate comprises computer readable code configured to cause the processor to activate the device discovery plug in to collect data chosen from a group consisting of: model and serial number information and included options from an embedded web server contained in the discovered peripheral devices.

13. The article of manufacture of claim 8, wherein the computer readable code is further configured to cause the processor to organize collected data into logical groups.

14. The article of manufacture of claim 8, wherein the computer readable code configured to cause the processor to download and activate comprises computer readable code configured to cause the processor to:

start a web browser;
direct the web browser to a web site associated with the vendor;
download the device discovery plug in from the vendor web site with the browser; and
activate the device discovery plug in with the web browser.

15. A computer implemented control system for a hard copy output engine, the system comprising:

memory configured to store a software module; and
processing circuitry configured to employ the software module to:
download a device discovery plug in;
activate the device discovery plug in to collect data describing peripheral devices related to a vendor associated with the device discovery plug in; and
transmit data describing peripheral devices discovered by the device discovery plug in.

16. The computer implemented control system of claim 15, wherein the processing circuitry configured to employ the software module activate comprises processing circuitry configured to employ the software module activate the device discovery plug in to collect data chosen from a group consisting of: model and serial number information and included options from an embedded web server contained in the discovered peripheral devices.

17. The computer implemented control system of claim 15, wherein the processing circuitry configured to employ the software module to activate includes processing circuitry configured to employ the software module to activate the device discovery plug in to collect data describing hard copy output engines selected from a group consisting of: facsimile machines, photocopiers and printers.

18. The computer implemented control system of claim 15, wherein the processing circuitry configured to employ the software module to download includes processing circuitry configured to employ the software module to download the device discovery plug in across a firewall from a web site associated with the vendor.

19. The computer implemented control system of claim 15, wherein the peripheral device is chosen from a group consisting of: facsimile machines, photocopiers and printers.

20. The computer implemented control system of claim 15, wherein the processing circuitry configured to employ the software module to download and activate comprises processing circuitry configured to employ the software module to:

- start a web browser;
- direct the web browser to a web site associated with the vendor;
- download the device discovery plug in from the vendor web site with the browser; and
- activate the device discovery plug in with the web browser.

21. A computer instruction signal embodied in a carrier wave carrying instructions that when executed by a processor cause the processor to:

download a device discovery plug in;
activate the device discovery plug in to collect data describing peripheral devices related to a vendor associated with the device discovery plug in; and
transmit data describing peripheral devices discovered by the device discovery plug in.

22. The computer instruction signal of claim 21, wherein the computer instruction signal embodied in the carrier wave carrying instructions that cause the processor to download comprises a computer instruction signal configured to cause the processor to download the device discovery plug in across a firewall from a web site associated with the vendor.

23. The computer instruction signal of claim 21, wherein the computer instruction signal embodied in the carrier wave carrying instructions that cause the processor to activate comprises a computer instruction signal configured to cause the processor to activate the device discovery plug in to collect data describing hard copy output engines.

24. The computer instruction signal of claim 21, wherein the computer instruction signal embodied in the carrier wave carrying instructions that cause the processor to activate comprises a computer instruction signal configured to cause the processor to activate the device discovery plug in to collect data describing hard copy output engines selected from a group consisting of: facsimile machines, photocopiers and printers.

25. The computer instruction signal of claim 21, wherein the computer instruction signal embodied in the carrier wave carrying instructions that cause the processor to activate comprises a computer instruction signal configured to cause the processor to activate the device discovery plug in to collect data chosen from a group consisting of: model and serial number information and included options from an embedded web server contained in the discovered peripheral devices.

26. The computer instruction signal of claim 21, wherein the computer instruction signal is further configured to cause the processor to organize collected data into logical groups.

27. The computer instruction signal of claim 21, wherein the computer instruction signal embodied in the carrier wave carrying instructions that cause the processor to download and activate comprises a computer instruction signal configured to cause the processor to:

- start a web browser;
- direct the web browser to a web site associated with the vendor;
- download the device discovery plug in from the vendor web site with the browser; and
- activate the device discovery plug in with the web browser.

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